

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 131435Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1877
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMCONSUL CASABLANCA
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL TANGIER
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 2613

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT MO
SUBJECT: MOROCCAN ELECTIONS UPDATE

REF: RABAT 1190

1. SUMMARY: DIRECT ELECTIONS FOR TWO-THIRDS OF PARLIAMENT
ANNOUNCED FOR JUNE 3. INDIRECT ELECTIONS PRESUMABLY TO FOLLOW
SHORTLY, WITH SEATING OF PARLIAMENT SLATED FOR OCTOBER 7
UNLESS EXTRAORDINARY SESSION IS CALLED EARLIER. GOM
MET MOST OF OPPOSITION DEMANDS, CLEARING WAY FOR LATEST ANNOUNCE-
MENT, BUT MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTIES REMAIN CAUTIOUS AND ARE
HOLDING OPEN BOYCOTT OPTION. NEVERTHELESS, PROSPECTS SEEM
GOOD THAT ALL MAJOR PARTIES WILL PARTICIPATE IN JUNE 3 ELECTIONS,
WHICH ALL OBSERVERS EXPECT WILL RESULT IN LARGE, IF SOMEWHAT
DIFFUSE, PRO-GOVERNMENT MAJORITY. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE GOM HAS SET JUNE 3 FOR THE DIRECT ELECTION OF
TWO-THIRDS OF MOROCCO'S NEXT PARLIAMENT, WHICH WILL BE ITS
FIRST UNDER THE 1972 CONSTITUTION. INDIRECT ELECTION OF
THE REMAINING ONE-THIRD WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED SOMETIME AFTER
JUNE 3. THE PARLIAMENT'S FIRST SCHEDULED SESSION IS THE
FIRST FRIDAY IN OCTOBER, ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN TALK OF
CONVENING AN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION IN THE INTERIM.

3. A SERIES OF LAWS PUBLISHED MAY 9 SET OUT THE MODALITIES OF THE UPCOMING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, ESTABLISHED VOTING DISTRICTS, AND DEFINED THE STATUTE OF A JUDICIAL BODY CALLED THE CONSTITUTIONAL CHAMBER OF THE SUPREME COURT, WHOSE MAIN FUNCTIONS WILL BE TO PERFORM JUDICIAL REVIEW OF LEGISLATION PASSED BY PARLIAMENT AND TO OVERSEE ELECTORAL PROCEDURES (SEE CHAPTER 10 OF THE CONSTITUTION).

4. THE DIRECT ELECTIONS ON JUNE 3 WILL CHOOSE 176 DEPUTIES. VOTING DISTRICTS ARE BASED ON APPROXIMATELY ONE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR 100,000 POPULATION.

5. THE INDIRECT ELECTIONS WILL SELECT 48 PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM THE COMMUNAL AND RURAL COUNCILS ELECTED DIRECTLY LAST NOVEMBER 12. ANOTHER 40 DEPUTIES WILL COME FROM LOCAL PROFESSIONAL "CHAMBERS" ELECTED IN MARCH. MOROCCO'S THREE SAHARA PROVINCES WILL SELECT FOUR DEPUTIES DIRECTLY AND AT LEAST THREE INDIRECTLY.

6. REPEATED SLIPPAGE OF ELECTION DAY STEMMED FROM ON AGAIN OFF AGAIN NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PALACE AND OPPOSITION PARTIES OVER PRECONDITIONS FOR THE LATTER'S PARTICIPATION. ON PAPER AT LEAST, THE GOM HAS NOW MET MOST PARTY DEMANDS. PRESS CENSORSHIP WAS SUSPENDED IN EARLY MARCH (RABAT 1384). VOTER LISTS WERE COMPLETELY REVISED IN MARCH-APRIL. VOTE COUNTS WILL BE CONDUCTED UNDER A COMPLICATED SYSTEM DESIGNED TO DISCOURAGE MANIPULATION. EACH PARTY WILL HAVE A UNIFORM COLOR NATIONALLY TO IDENTIFY ITS CANDIDATES IN CONFIDENTIAL

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PUBLICITY AND TO DISTINGUISH THE BALLOTS FOR ILLITERATE VOTERS.

7. THE RIGHTIST PARTIES, NOTABLY POPULAR MOVEMENT (MP) AND CONSTITUTIONAL AND DEMOCRATIC POPULAR MOVEMENT (MPCD), CAN BE EXPECTED TO GO ALONG WITH THE ELECTION SCENARIO DOCILELY. NATIONAL UNION OF POPULAR FORCES (UNFP) AGAIN PROBABLY WILL NOT PARTICIPATE, ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOME PRESSURE FROM ITS UMT ALLY TO FIELD CANDIDATES. THE ISTIQLAL, SOCIALIST UNION OF POPULAR FORCES (USFP) AND PARTY OF PROGRESS AND SOCIALISM (PPS) HAVE BEEN CAUTIOUS, HAVING HAD TO CONTEND WITH UNHAPPINESS AMONG THEIR MILITANTS OVER ABUSES IN THE EARLIER LOCAL ELECTION ROUNDS. BOTH ISTIQLAL AND USFP HAVE POSITIONED THEMSELVES SO AS TO MAINTAIN MAXIMUM PRESSURE ON THE PALACE AS ELECTION DAY APPROACHES. NEITHER PARTY RULES OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A BOYCOTT, THEY SAY, IF THE GOVERNMENT OPENLY VIOLATES NEUTRALITY. THEIR LEADERS WILL PROBABLY RETAIN THEIR GOVERNMENT PORTFOLIOS UNTIL THE

INDIRECT ELECTIONS ARE HELD. THEY ALSO MAINTAIN THAT THEY WILL HOLD OUT ON THE QUESTION OF PARTICIPATION IN ANY SUBSEQUENT CABINET UNTIL THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO JUDGE THE GOVERNMENT'S "GOOD FAITH" IN THE JUNE 3 ELECTIONS.

8. THE PARTIES CONDEDE THAT THE INDIRECT ELECTIONS WILL BE DOMINATED BY "INDEPENDENT" CANDIDATES, ALSO NOTING THAT MANY OF THE NEW ELECTORAL DISTRICTS FOR THE DIRECT ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN GERRYMANDERED TO INTRODUCE RURAL ELEMENTS INTO OPPOSITION-DOMINATED URBAN DISTRICTS. NEVERTHELESS, THEY CONTINUE TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS UNDERWAY, BUT IN A MANNER WHICH DOES NOT HUMILIATE THE PARTICIPANTS THROUGH BLATANT MANIPULATION.

9. COMMENT: "INDEPENDENT" CANDIDATES ARE EXPECTED TO DOMINATE THE FINAL TALLIES. THESE, ALONG WITH THE PRO-CONFIDENTIAL

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GOVERNMENT PARTIES OF THE RIGHT, SHOULD EMERGE IN CONTROL OF OVER TWO-THIRDS OF THE PARLIAMENT, THUS GREATLY REDUCING THE TROUBLE MAKING POTENTIAL OF THE OPPOSITION. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN, HOWEVER, IS THE NECESSITY FOR THE GOVERNMENT EVENTUALLY TO ORGANIZE THE DIVERSE FORCES MAKING UP THE PARLIAMENT INTO A DISCIPLINED BODY. ONE ELEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY TO INFUSE LEADERSHIP WILL BE TO PUT FORWARD A NUMBER OF CURRENT MINISTERS AS CANDIDATES, A TACTIC EVIDENT IN LAST NOVEMBER'S LOCAL ELECTIONS. IT IS HARD TO TELL WHO THE PRINCIPAL FIGURES OF THIS EFFORT WILL BE. PRIME MINISTER OSMAN, FOR EXAMPLE, MAY RUN, AND MP LEADER AHERDAN IS AGAIN SHOWING SIGNS OF WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE WITH THE PALACE.

10. WE ASSUME ON THE BASIS OF CONCESSIONS MADE TO DATE TO OPPOSITION DEMANDS THAT THE PALACE WILL CONTINUE TO ATTEMPT TO AVOID THE EMBARRASSMENT OF AN ISTIQLAL/USFP BOYCOTT. IF SO, MOROCCO'S THIRD ATTEMPT SINCE INDEPENDENCE AT PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT SHOULD GET OFF TO A CAUTIOUS BUT HOEPFUL START BY AUTUMN.
ANDERSON

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